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The rise of state-owned enterprises, in particular from growth poles outside the Western capitalist core, has recently caught a lot of scholarly and public attention. This dissertation contributes to these debates by providing an analysis of the global expansion of state-owned oil companies and how this process has impacted on corporate elite networks at the apex of the oil and gas industry.

Applying the method of social network analysis this study shows how the expansion of these major state-owned players has in fact led to more cooperation with Western private oil companies and thus to a more transnational and hybrid global energy network. The oil elite networks, in which the directors of these companies are embedded, however, turned out to be hardly integrated. This study thereby illuminates how oil elite power is still organized in distinctive social networks whereby non-Western directors do not have substantial access to the corporate elite networks traditional to the West.

In terms of governance, the rules of the game, this study finds that the growing influence of non-Western players is to a large extent conditional upon their capacity to play by the rules of the game as defined along Western (business) standards and interests. Given the steady growth of some of these major players it seems clear that a tipping point will be reached when non-Western players will become actual rule makers. What this study shows is that this will not imply a radical break with the existing rules of the game but can be expected to lead to more hybrid forms of governance in which elements of the current rules will be combined with the values and interests of non-Western powers.

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**State-owned oil companies,
corporate elite networks and governance**

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